

CLAIMS

1. An apparatus, comprising:
- 5 a signal input for receiving a program signal associated with one of a plurality of signal channels, said signal input selecting one of said plurality of signal channels in response to a user input;
- a signal output for providing an output signal derived from said program signal;
- 10 an auxiliary data decoder for detecting program related information included in each said program signal; and
- a processor operatively connected to said signal input, said signal output and said auxiliary data decoder, wherein said processor is responsive to user selection of a first operating mode for controlling said
- 15 output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce user access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels and user selection of a second operating mode for providing user access to said output signals and prior to detection of said program
- 20 related information.
2. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a second signal input (~~101,102~~) for providing a second program signal from a second signal source, and a switch (~~140~~) for operatively coupling one of
- 25 said signal input and second signal input to said signal output, said output signal being derived from one of said respective program signals, wherein said processor controls said output signal in said predetermined manner when the user selects one of said signal inputs for at least until said program related information is detected.
- 30 3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said program signal is a television signal.
4. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said program
- 35 signal comprises a plurality of digital signal packets.
5. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said program signal comprises a plurality of time-multiplexed digital signal packets.

AMENDED SHEET

6. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said predetermined manner of control comprises one of blanking the video signal, replacing the video signal with an On Screen Display message, muting the audio signal and disabling associated closed captions.

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7. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said processor is responsive to user selection of a second operating mode for controlling said output signal in said predetermined manner for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of a plurality of user designated signal channels of said plurality of signal channels.

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8. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said processor is capable of providing an On Screen Display menu signal for allowing user selection of said first operating mode.

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9. The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said processor is capable of providing a restricted access On Screen Display menu for allowing user selection of said first operating mode.

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10. The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein access to said On Screen Display menu is password protected.

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11. A method for selectively blanking a display comprising the steps of:

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selecting a change of channel to be displayed;
blanking the display;
tuning to the selected channel;
determining whether a default blanking mode has been set;
if a default blanking mode is not set, unblank the display, otherwise retain display blanking;

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determine whether authorization exists for displaying the selected channel;

if authorization for displaying the selected channel exists, display the selected channel, otherwise blank the display.